FBI Spy Apologies Weighed

3/31/76

By John M. Goshko
Washington Post Staff Writer

Thousands of persons who were victims of FBI harrassment may soon receive letters from the Justice Department apologizing and spelling out the tactics that were employed against them.

The feasibility of such a notification program is under study by Justice Department officials, and they are expected to recommend to Attorney General Edward H. Levi that the effort be made.

Under the plan, official individual notifications would be sent to everyone the department can identify as having been a target of the FBI's domestic counterintelligence program.

Cointelpro, as it was known within the FBI, consisted of a series of campaigns between 1956 and 1971 that sought to disrupt militant political groups of the left and right and harass and discredit their members. The covert FBI activities had been ordered by the bureau's late director, J. Edgar Hoover.

Among the targets were the Communist Party, Ku Klux Klan, Black Panthers, Students for a Democratic Society and a number of organizations involved in civil rights and anti-Vietnam war activities.

In many cases, members suffered damage to their reputations in their communities or among their colleagues because the FBI fabricated evidence against them or sent anonymous or derogatory letters to their families, employers or coworkers.

Justice Department sources said the aim of a notification program would be to make partial amends by giving those who were victimized an official acknowledgement that the charges against them were false.

The study, which was ordered by Levi, is under the direction of Rex E. Lee, assistant attorney general in charge of the Civil Division, and Michael E. Shaheen Jr., chief of the department's office of professional responsibility.